1   What is claimed is:

2   1. A computer-implemented visualization model of similarity relationships between

3   documents comprising:

4   performing a similarity search based on at least one attribute of a reference

5   document to find at least one target document with similar attributes;

6   creating a visual representation of the reference database document and the at

7   least one target document;

8   creating a visual representation of the similarities between the reference document

9   and the at least one target document; and

10   displaying the visual representations of the database documents and their

11   similarities on a graphical user interface.

1   2. The method according to claim 1 wherein the at least one target documents that

2   are similarity searched reside in a plurality of databases.

1   3. The method according to claim 1 wherein the similarity search returns a result set

2   of target documents that are used by the visualization model to create the visual

3   representation of the documents and the similarities between the documents.

1   4. A computer-implemented interactive visualization model of similarity

2   relationships between documents comprising:

3   using a similarity search performed on attributes of a reference document which

4   results in a set of 0 to n target documents with similar attributes;

5   creating a visual representation of the reference document and each target

6   document;

7   creating a visual representation of similarities between the reference document

8   and each target document; and

9   displaying the visual representation of the reference documents and each target

10   document and their similarities on a graphical user interface.

1   5. The method of claim 4 further comprising allowing a user using the graphical user

2   interface to initiate the similarity search and select the attributes of the reference

3   document to be used in the similarity search.

1   6. The method of claim 4 further comprising allowing a user using the graphical user

2   interface to choose any attributes of the reference document to be used in the

3   similarity search.

1   7. The method of claim 6 further comprising using attributes of a target document as

2   a source for a new similarity search.

1   8. A computer-implemented visualization model of similarities between documents

2   comprising:

3   displaying a reference hierarchical object (a reference model node);

4   allowing a user to initiate a similarity search, based on at least one attribute of the

5   reference hierarchical object, to find at least one target hierarchical objects (a

6   target model node);

7   visually representing the reference model node and the at least one target model

8   node that meet a similarity search criteria;

9   visually representing the similarities between the reference model node and each

10   target model node as a model edge;

| 11 | displaying the visual representations of the model node and model edge on a |
| 12 | graphical user interface. |

1 9. The method according to claim 8 wherein the model node comprises:

2 a reference to the hierarchical object the model node represents;

3 a reference to at least one attribute of the hierarchical object used in the similarity

4 search if a model edge exists; and

5 visual properties of the hierarchical document the model node represents.

1 10. The method according to claim 8 further comprising storing the visual

2 representation of the reference model node, each target model node, and each

3 model edge in computer memory or on disk.

1 11. The method according to claim 8 wherein the model edge comprises:

2 an identifier of the reference model node from which the visual representation of

3 the model edge will extend and an identifier of the at least one target model node

4 to which the visual representation of the model edge will extend; and

5 a list of the similarity search attributes used in the similarity search.

1 12. The method according to claim 11 further comprising user chosen attributes to be

2 used in the similarity search.

1 13. A computer-implemented method of visualizing similarity relationships between

2 documents comprising:

3 using a reference hierarchical document;

4 performing a similarity search based on user selected attributes of the reference

5 hierarchical document and determining a result set of target documents

6 comprising 0 to n hierarchical documents;

7   converting each hierarchical document to a model node that visually represents

8   each hierarchical document to be displayed on a graphical user interface; and

9   using the similarity search results, creating a model edge that visually represents

10   the similarities between the reference hierarchical document and each hierarchical

11   document in the result set to be displayed on a graphical user interface.

1   14. The method of claim 13 further comprising displaying the model edge, model

2   node on a graphical user interface.

1   15. The method of claim 8, wherein each model edge indicates a degree of similarity

2   between the reference hierarchical object and the target hierarchical object is

3   displayed as a line connecting model nodes, said model nodes are depicted as

4   geometric shapes on the graphical user interface.

1   16. The method of claim 15, wherein the length of the line connecting the model

2   nodes varies as a function of the degree of similarity between the reference

3   document and the target document referenced by the model nodes.

1   17. The method of claim 1, wherein the visual representation is three dimensional.

1   18. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for a visualization model of

2   similarity relationships between documents comprising:

3   performing a similarity search based on at least one attribute of a reference

4   document to find at least one target document with similar attributes;

5   creating a visual representation of the reference database document and the at

6   least one target document;

7   creating a visual representation of the similarities between the reference document

8   and the at least one target document; and

9   displaying the visual representations of the database documents and their

10   similarities on a graphical user interface.

1   19. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for a visualization model of

2   similarities between documents comprising:

3   displaying a reference hierarchical object (a reference model node);

4   allowing a user to initiate a similarity search, based on at least one attribute of the

5   reference hierarchical object, to find at least one target hierarchical objects (a

6   target model node);

7   visually representing the reference model node and the at least one target model

8   node that meet a similarity search criteria;

9   visually representing the similarities between the reference model node and each

10   target model node as a model edge;

11   displaying the visual representations of the model node and model edge on a

12   graphical user interface.